



Riverside Primary School

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Dear Parents and Carers,

Year 6 - Social Media Usage and Online Safety

I am writing to share our growing concerns regarding the use of social media and messaging platforms by some of our Year 6 pupils outside of school, particularly during evenings and weekends.

Recently, the content of several group chats and posts across platforms such as WhatsApp, Snapchat, and TikTok has been brought to our attention. As a school, we strongly believe parents should be aware of what their children are viewing, posting, and sharing online.

Over recent weeks, we have seen a significant increase in the number of peer relational issues originating online. Almost daily, staff are having to spend valuable time unraveling conflicts that began or escalated via WhatsApp group chats, Snapchat stories, or comments on TikTok. As a direct result, some children are missing vital learning time because school staff must dedicate an increasing amount of time to addressing these incidents.

Navigating the complexities of social media is exceptionally challenging for children of primary age, who are still developing their social skills and understanding of digital footprints:

- **WhatsApp (Age 13+):** Group chats can rapidly escalate. Once messages, voice notes, photos, or videos are shared, the sender loses control over how that content is forwarded, saved, or redistributed.
- **Snapchat (Age 13+):** Features like disappearing messages, temporary stories, and location-sharing ("Snap Map") can create a false sense of privacy, leading children to share inappropriate material or track peers unnecessarily.
- **TikTok (Age 13+):** Public comments, direct messages, and viral trends or "challenges" can expose children to harmful content and encourage mean-spirited or risky behaviour.

If you allow your child to access these or similar platforms, we ask for your active vigilance. Online interactions require the same level of supervision, boundary-setting, and support as real-world behaviour. While every family's approach will differ, effective strategies include:

- **Checking Age Restrictions:** Reviewing whether apps like WhatsApp, Snapchat, and TikTok are suitable for your child.
- **Monitoring Apps & Downloads:** Regularly checking which platforms, games, and messaging tools are installed on their devices.
- **Enacting Parental Controls:** Utilising built-in restrictions on smartphones, tablets, and gaming consoles to limit screen time and block inappropriate content.
- **Routine Message Reviews:** Making it a regular habit to check messages, group chats, comment histories, and media shared or received.
- **Establishing Device Boundaries:** Keeping device use to communal family spaces and removing phones/tablets from bedrooms before bedtime.
- **Open Dialogue:** Encouraging your child to talk openly about what they are seeing, posting, or experiencing online without fear of immediate punishment.

We ask for your active partnership over this weekend in reviewing your child's online activity, checking the nature of any group chats or social profiles they participate in, and discussing responsible digital behaviour with them.

At school, we will continue to reinforce online safety through our Computing and Citizenship curriculums, as well as providing 1:1 guidance and restorative support whenever issues arise.

Thank you for your continued support and cooperation in keeping our children safe and focused on their learning.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Claire Smith

Headteacher

